DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 235 302 CE 036 723

AUTHOR Palchinsky, Jo
TITLE Cable Technology: A Challenge for Adult Educators.
PUB DATE Nov 82
NOTE 19p.; Best copy available. Paper presented at the National Adult Education Conference (San Antonio, TX, November 1982).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; *Adult Education; *Adult Educators; *Cable Television; Educational Television; Production Techniques; *Teacher Participation; *Teacher Role; Telecourses

ABSTRACT

The penetration of cable television throughout American communities makes it a potentially significant tool for improving the quality and accessibility of adult education. As cities begin to include in the cable franchise allotment monies for access by community members, adult educators need to become actively involved during the development of a cable system. To decide and to plan how to use cable technology, adult educators must become familiar with the nature of the medium. There are two differing concepts of interaction relative to cable television utilization for adult learning. Interactive educational cable television may be in these formats: discussion/call-in, interview/call-in, debate/call-in, and on-site discussion. Another interaction possibility is permitting adult community members to produce their own educational program for cablecasting over a community access channel. Adult educators need to become familiar with cable technology, become involved in franchises and groups concerned with access utilization, initiate projects using the cable system, begin to offer training in television production, and share experiences. (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED235302

CABLE TECHNOLOGY:

A CHALLENGE FOR ADULT EDUCATORS

Jo Palchinsky

Audio Visual Specialist
Florida International University
Miami, Florida

A paper presented at the
National Adult Education Conference
San Antonio, Texas
November 1982

CE 036 723

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Palchinsky

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Cable Technology: A Challenge for Adult Educators

Jo Palchinsky

ABSTRACT

The educational and social impact of cable technology has been the concern of few educators over the past decade. Now that cable television reaches approximately 27% of the TV households in America and is estimated to reach as high as 95% by 1995, adult educators should be concerned with the potential effect this communications system might have on them and their clientele, the adult learner. The current penetration of cable television has not only resulted in a highly profitable commercial enterprise, but makes it a potentially significant tool for improving the quality of and the access to adult education.

This paper attempts to develop a basic understanding of cable television and the educational and political implications for adult educators. It alerts adult educators to their role in this technological advancement, which is recently developing in many metropolitan areas in our country. It introduces two differing concepts of 'interactive' relative to cable television utilization for adult learning. Examples are presented of how cable technology is being used effectively for adult education throughout the United States.

The author proposes: 1) how the use of cable technology can affect adult learning; and 2) what adult educators of all types should do in light of this significant communications medium.

Cable Technology: A Challenge for Adult Learners

Introduction

Among the many challenges which adult educators face today, there exists an exciting invitation to become involved in cable technology. Cable television now reaches about 27% of the TV households in the United States (Broadcasting, 1982), and is estimated to reach as high as 95% by 1995 (PEPC, 1982). Its penetration throughout our communities makes it a potentially significant tool for improving the quality of and access to adult education. An advantage of cable over regular over-the-air broadcasting is that it can be more locally responsive in terms of: addressing the variety of educational needs of various community groups, scheduling the use of cable facilities, and the content of the programs which can be transmitted.

In 1974, Cassara urged adult educators to "become involved in developing ways of using cable technology and in researching ways the technology can be used to deliver educational services to their communities" (p.2). Over the past decade, many communities with active cable systems have been exploring the potential use of cable for various adult education purposes. Not so much from commitment by cable companies, but from crusading adult educators who believe that the technology can provide more than just additional entertainment, sports, news, and movies for the TV audience, but that cable technology "can be turned around to expand human experience" (Owens, 1981, p.31).

If the full potential benefits of cable technology are to be realized for our clientele, the adult learner, then many more adult educators who function at "the firing level, program-director level, and professional-leadership level" (Knowles, 1980) should become more professionally involved with the medium.

This paper attempts: to assist the reader in developing an understanding of cable television; to provide information concerning how cable television for adult education can be made interactive; to illustrate how interaction is

achieved through community access television production; and to summarize why and how adult educators should proceed to accept the challenge cable technology summons.

Understanding Cable Television

In addition to providing broadcast programming, a cable system carries locally originated programs which are produced not only by the cable system operator but by other members of the local community. This transmission of programs is referred to as cablecasting. The programs produced by community members are cablecasted over the channels designated for community access. Community, or 'public', access channels are provided for use by the general public, educational and religious institutions, the municipal government, other designated institutions (e.g. public library, health consortia) or for local lease on a non-discriminatory basis. How many of these channels a community has access to is indicated in the cable franchise, which is the contract between the city and the cable company. This contract is developed since a cable company must use the public rights-of-way to hang or bury its coaxial cable. Not only does this franchise concisely state the services the company will deliver, the cable policy and regulations of the city, fees and renewal processes, but all details of the relationship between the city and the company including community access requirments.

Niemi (1974) saw one of the limitations of cable television for adult education as the "lack of funds and access by members of a community to equipment for editing, dubbing, etc." (p.5). However, the current trend has been for the cities to include in the franchise allottment for monies for such access. Recently in several large metropolitan area franchises, the cable companies are contracted to provide as high as $2 million for public access equipment over

the life of the contract, and once the system is built (typically 3 years) annual budgets reaching the million dollar range for public access alone.

The reason these large sums of money are made a part of the franchise is not because of good-hearted cable operators, it is because community members are demanding it. When community members become actively involved in the franchising process, making their needs and desires known, the city officials tend to comply by continuing the franchise negotiations until a cable company offers what is wanted. Smith (1981) warns us that there are people in the cable business "who do not expect that they're going to have to deliver what they're promising" (p.27). One reason is if lots of access channels and money for staff, equipment and services is provided and does not get used in the earlier part of development, many cable operators believe they won't have to deliver all that is contracted.

Another trend involves foundations who allot grant monies for community access television projects. One such group, California's Foundation for Community Service Television awarded five grants early last year as part of their "continuing desire to build partnerships between the cable industry, local government, educators and the general public" (Carlson, 1981). Two of their recipients were the Siskiyou Performing Arts Center and PACE (Public Access Cablecasting by and for the Elderly). Other funding sources include the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the federal Department of Education (e.g. Fund for the Improvement of Post-secondary Education-FIPSE), State Departments of Education, and various local agencies.

Since a cable franchise usually has a life of ten to fifteen years, it is during its development that adult educators must become actively involved. For the educational needs of the adult community to be served, it is important that

those who are responsible for local adult education become familiar with the technology of cable, the public policy of franchising and the political climate of their local government. Only if there is enough local interest in the franchise negotiations, will the benefits of cable to adult learners in a community be actualized.

Adult educators can learn more about cable technology by referring to Forbes (1978), Hamburg (1979), Hollowell (1977), Mahoney, et. als. (1980), and United Church of Christ (1981); community access television by referring to Bretz (1976), Schiller (1979), and United Cable TV Corp. (1981); and cable television franchising by referring to Michigan State (1980), New York State (1978), and Peck, et. als. (1981). Also, the National Federation of Local Cable Programmers has available a folder full of information on the above topics entitle "Educators and Cable Television" (see bibliography).

To find out if your city has a franchise, contact your city hall. Since the franchise is a public document, it should be available. Examine the document looking specifically for the community access services, such as access channels, video equipment, production assistence and interconnection with neighboring communities. Once you are familiar with the services, decide how you want to use the cable system, then contact your local cable operator.

In deciding and planning how to use the cable system, become familiar with the nature of the medium. Tate (1974) suggests that adult educators "must not view cable television as simply a new 'pipeline' to carry old goodsto the new market place. The way the medium is used should convey the message that new ideas, new concepts, and new institutions that are more humane and more responsive can and will be developed" (p.21).

Interactive Educational Cable Television

In 1960, Cassirer made the following statement:

> "Adult education, which traditionally is concerned with people rather than production, has a particular contribution to make where the producers feel generally lost, ignorant, and isolated. Theirs is a world of output, while the educator seeks to conceive the totality of of man in society. To make television a tool not for the producer, but of man, to permit active participation of the viewer in the exploration and utilization of the medium of communication, remains peculiarly the challenge of the adult educator" (1960).

A few adult educators who work for the Massachusettes Department of Education accepted this challenge and organized two pilot projects initiating "An Adult Education Cable Service" (Foote, 1982). The projects demonstrate how schools and community groups can use local cable channels to deliver instructional television programming to adult learners. The two communities sponsoring the projects chose "parent education" as their theme, making use of programming provided by Massachusettes Educational Television (MET). These projects incorporated various interactive formats which are frequently utilized by local public broadcasting stations. A review of these interactive formats may provide resourceful information for adult educators who may be interested in using cable television for adult education activities.

The discussion/call-in format involves a moderator and a few other community members who, following the cablecast of the program, are situated in the studio and describe the themes of the program as well as invite viewers to call in their questions and comments. The interview/call-in format involves a moderator who, following the cablecast of the program, interviews an 'expert' in a field related to the theme of the program. Viewers are invited to call and direct questions to the expert. The debate/call-in format involves two persons who offer different viewpoints on an issue related to the program's theme and gives

reasons for their opinions. Again, viewers are invited to call in and voice their own opinion, or question the viewpoints presented. The on-site discussion format involves a group who is gathered at a specific location in the community (e.g. school, library, studio) who views the cablecasted program. Following the program, a facilitator raises questions and moderates a discussion. This may take place at multiple sites. Groups may telephone the studio to report some of the issues that have been raised. A discussion/call-in format could follow.

Another experimental project, this one funded by FIPSE, incorporated these interactive formats. The Office of Educational Growth Opportunities (EGO) for senior adults, a program of San Diego State University whose purpose is "to provide lifelong learning", cablecasted nine 8-week courses during a one-year period (Taylor, 1980b). The survival skills course which covered such topics as burglary, fire, etc.,featured guest speakers. The programs where followed by discussion and learner participation, both through a small studio audience and telephone calls from viewers.

The attributes of live interactive formats are nicely summarized by Lukowsky (1980): 1. real time cablecasting can offer the sensation of direct contact between individuals, 2. live transmission can be seen on a home television as well as the place of origination, 3. it provides for greater learner participation in media events and allows them to present themselves in the event and to alter it, 4. it makes video intimate, 5) live transmission is more economical than prerecorded videotapes (e.g. discussions/interviews/debates), 6. live transmission is full of chance.

Everett (1981) proclaims that "we must assume that they [adult learners] are at least as eager to experience the social benefits of classroom education

as they are to learn" (p.39). The incorporation of an interactive component in an adult education activity that utilizes cable technology, provides a social dimension which many believe is necessary in any adult education experience.

There are many adult learners with educational needs that can be satisfied through the enrollment in a telecourse. Particularly those individuals who can not leave their homes due to physical or financial reasons or because they live far from educational institutions. Typically, a "telecourse" is defined as an instructional method that combines entertaining and instructive video programs with printed study materials (Chamberlain, 1980). Models of degree credit/degree granting through the use of telecourses can be found at the University of Mid-America and the WNET Adult Open Learning Project in New York. Usually one can enroll in a telecourse through a higher education program, which makes use of television's broadcasting stations. However, these telecourses are being adapted for use with local cable systems. Some of the advantages to using cable include: the ease in scheduling a cable channel as opposed to a commercial or public broadcasting channel; the additional number of times a program may be scheduled for transmission throughout a given week without much difficulty; the programs can be narrowcasted (i.e. directed at a small, targeted audience); and if a community access channel is used there is usually no or little cost involved. These reasons make the use of cable technology for telecourses efficient.

Coastline Community College in Orange County, California, reports that among the 25% of their students who are taking telecourses, the average age is 39 (Taylor, 1980a). And, about 800 other colleges have used their courses at any one time, with 450 using one or more. Like newspaper courses and

courses-by-mail, the telecourse is yet another means of providing educational opportunities for adult learners. However, the use of cable technology with the incorporation of an interactive component provides for the learner access to other humans, thus expanding the traditional telecourse experience to include a social dimension making it a true adult education experience.

Interaction through Community Television Production

In addition to adult educators adding an interactive component to educational television activities via cable, other exciting interaction possibilities exist. Reference is made here to the interaction between adult community members who are permitted to produce their own educational programs for cablecasting over a community access channel. The actual program produced may be unimportant compared to the quality of interaction and the learning that occured during the production process. This type of community access television is unique. "It emphasizes process rather than product, participation rather than viewing. . . it demystifies the television process and gives people skills to deal with television as a cultural phenomenon" (Bell, 1980).

The use of portable video equipment to record people and events taking place in the local environment provides a discovery process for the adult learners who are doing the recording. Furthermore, when the learners use those recorded images to produce a program for cablecasting, they are learning about themselves as well as their culture. By increasing awareness of the existing cultural system, you increase the ability to exercise control over the development of the community. The benefit of allowing adult learners to produce educational programs of local interest is two fold: it allows the cable system to truely be a part of the community; and, it allows the adult learners who produce the program to become actively involved in the development of their community.

To illustrate this process -- a small group of learners who are interested in making a change in their community would first have to reach other people in the community and get them thinking about the identified problem or issue and start taking about solutions. Recording others thoughts and concerns can facilitate the thinking. Henault (1971) explains that because the people behind the cameras and microphones are very much like those being asked the questions, the citizens will not feel they are being intruded upon by strangers. Using these recordings along with recordings of public meetings, interviews with public officials, etc., the group could edit a program for cablecasting. These adult learners may become engaged in a variety of technical skills during the production process. In addition to video and audio recording, learners may find themselves interviewing, researching, writing, scripting, narrating, editing and/or promoting.

In many communities, individuals can learn these skills by attending workshops provided at the community access center. Some access centers which have sophisticated equipment offer up to 30 hours of training for community members. Graduates usually receive a certificate once they have completed the training, and only then are permitted to have access to the complete studio facility. In other communities, individuals can learn these skills by enrolling in a short course offered through adult education centers, community centers, and lifelong learning programs. Still in other communities, libraries, religious groups and other specialized services provide training.

To indicate how community access television is being used, the following brief descriptions provide a sampling of programs produced by community groups or individuals around the country:

Old Times: East Lansing Remembers, where prominent community members who remember the events and achievements of a younger East Lansing share their memories, Library Channel, East Lansing, Michigan;

A show on traditional flower arranging, The Frankfort Garden Club, Frankfort, Kentucky;

Fire prevention and safety tips for kids delivered by several hand puppets which were cloth gloves painted to represent characters, Fire Station No. 7, Syracuse, New York;

Congressional Wrestling, a comedy show about fictional congressman, young lawyer, Arlington, Virginia;

General Gap, weekly interactive show where senior citizens and teens hash out their differences, Reading, Pennsylvania;

Our Town, a weekly magazine format, highlighting activities of the city's community center as well as the community-at-large, Norwood, Ohio;

The Art of Ron Markman, a 15 minute program on the imaginary land of "Mukfa" profiled through artworks by an artist in Bloomington, Indiana;

The Good Life, a documentary on the life of quadriplegics, produced by two cerebral-palsey victims in Minneapolis, Minnisota;

A program on the adjustments of aging produced by PACE trained senior citizens, San Diego, California;

Local minister and a staff member of the local mental health agency enrolled in an adult evening photography course interview eachother about their newly found and shared interest in photography, students in course, Perkasie-Sellersville Community, Pa.;

Talk Back, each week after playing 5 minutes from their Minister's sermon 2 or 3 members of a Methodist congregation talk informally about their own lives in relation to his words, Knoxville, Tennessee;

A series on trauma with local medical professionals presenting trauma information and procedures, Altoona Area Public Library, Altoona, Pa.

(Bell, 1980; Rhodes, 1981; Tayler, 1982; TV, 1982; Wolin, 1980).

These and many other adult learners around the country are actively involved in producing programs which are of <u>local</u> educational interest. The informal learning process which involves the planning, designing, developing, disseminating and evaluation of a completed production, provides for these adult learners who carry out the process a stimulating learning experience as well as intense interaction with others. In addition, the cablecasted program may stimulate further adult learning on the part of the viewer. One may find

the program invigorating and may seek to further inquire about the program's content. Another viewer may be inspired to become involved in the production of another program of local educational interest. Adult educators can facilitate these types of learning experiences and opportunities for interaction by becoming involved themselves in the community access television movement.

Why and How to Accept the Challenge

The local cable system, which Collins (1988) indicates is among the many "community-based initiatives" which have yet to be fully explored, grants the adult educator a convenient opportunity to provide a variety of "meaningful contextually-relevant adult learning experiences" (p.33). Are you an adult educator who is ready to explore how your community cable system can be used to provide exciting learning experiences for your adult clientele?

Let's review some of the benefits to adult learners of using the cable system to provide educational programming which incorporates an interactive format:

1. it provides another alternative means of making available learning opportunities for adult learners;

2. it is more economical, particularly for individuals who can not leave their homes, or live far from educational institutions;

3. the interactive component offers the sensation of direct contact between participants;

4. it allows the participants to present themselves in the learning event and to alter it;

5. it makes video intimate.

Let's review some of the benefits to adult learners of allowing them to produce their own programs for cablecasting:

1. the process demystifies television by allowing learners to perceive and analyze the techniques that go into a production;

2. the learner begins to develop sophisticated critical viewing skills of both the technical aspects and the narrative content of television programming;

3. it provides an opportunity to apply knowledge and share that knowledge with others;

4. it provides a creative outlet for talents and abilities;

5. the excitement generated through working on a production carries over to other activities;

6. it provides a means of social interaction with other community members;

7. it provides a means to increase the learner's awareness of his unique local cultural system.

What can adult educators who function in various roles do in light of this new communications medium? First, become familiar with it -- read, inquire, and learn about cable technology. Then, become professionally active. Ascertain the interests of your clientele to find out their concerns pertaining to the potential use of cable for learning experiences. Become involved in the franchise negotiations. If a franchise exists, find out what services are available and pursue their use. Many communities have organized consortia of various entities (e.g. educational, health, religious, etc.) which concern themselves with access utilization. Seek out these groups, find out their functions, and become involved. Acquire funding and initiate pilot projects using the cable system. Begin to offer training in television production. Make available your facilities for discussion sites that may be needed by other adult learning programs using cable. Better yet, make available your facilities for a community access center. And by all means, share with other adult educators your successful and not-so-successful experiences in using cable to expand adult learning opportunities.

Remember Cassirer's statement expressed back in 1960 that the use of tele-

vision "remains peculiarly the challenge of the adult educator". Remember Tate's proposal made in the 1970's that the use of cable television can be made "more humane and more responsive". Well, now in the 1980's we find cable is becoming more and more accessable and that there are many adult educators who are exploring its potential. You too can join the forefront of this movement by becoming more professionally active with cable technology and accepting the challenge.

References

Bell, J. A different kind of television, Public Management, June 1980, 62, 5-7.

Bretz, R. Handbook for producing educational and public access programs for cable television. Englewood, New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications, 1976.

Broadcasting cablecasting yearbook. Washington, D. C.: Broadcasting Publications, Inc., 1982.

Carlson, C. H. Regional reports - west coast, Community Television Review January 1981, 4, 7.

Cassara, B. Position paper on the responsibility of the adult education movement for development of cable television. Washington, D. C.: Federal City College, 1974.

Cassirer, H. R. A wide horizon. Television and adult education, 1960, 2, 1-2.

Chamberlain, M. N. (ed.). Providing continuing education by media and technology. New Directions for continuing Education, 1980, 5.

Collins, M. Multiple realities, media and adult learning. Media Adult Learning, 1982, 4, 30-35.

Everett, J. R. Courses by TV reaffirm value of classroom. Survey of Continuing Education, Sunday, August 30, 1981, 39.

Foote, S. Organizing an adult education cable service: process and procedures. Cambridge: Massachusettes Department of Education, MET, 1982.

Forbes, D. The new communicators. Washington, D. C.: Communications Press, 1978.

Hamburg, M. All about cable. New York: Law Journal Seminars Press, 1979.

Henaut, D. T. The media: powerful catalyst for community change. In J. A. Niemi (ed.), Mass media and adult education. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Educational Technology Publications, Inc., 1971.

Hollowell, M. L. (ed.). The cable/broadband communications book, 1977-1978. Washington, D. C.: Communications Press, 1977.

Knowles, M. The modern practice of adult education: from pedagogy to andragogy, revised and updated. Chicago: Follett, 1980.

Lukowsky, J. Live cablecasting: expanding the role of interactive telecommunications. Community Television Review, May 1980, 3, 16-17.

Mahoney, S., Demartino, N., and Stengel, R. Keeping in pace with the new television. New York: VNU Books, International, 1980.

Michigan State Senate. Citizens guide to cable television franchising. Lansing, Michigan: By the author, Capitol Building, 1980.

National Federation of Local Cable Programmers. Educators and cable television. Kettering, Ohio: NFLCP, [n.d.].

New York State Cable TV Commision. Cable television franchising workbook. New York: By the author, Empire State Plaza, 1978.

Niemi, J. A. Cable TV: its future in adult education. Mass Media/Adult Education. Athens, Ga.: Georgia Center for Continuing Education, 1974, 40, 2-6.

Owens, B. Towards establishing the notion that media can bring benefits to all. Community Television Review, January 1981, 4, 30-31.

Peck, D. et. als. Cable franchising primer. Kettering, Ohio: National Federation of Local Cable Programmers, 1981.

PEPC. The role of educational technology in the future of postsecondary education in Florida (working draft number 1). Postsecondary Education Planning Commission, State of Florida, February 11, 1982.

Rhodes, M. Altoona, Pa.: 'new library' preserves local data on videotape. Community Television Review, October 1981, 4, 41.

Schiller, D. CATV program origination and production. Blue Ridge Summit, Pennsylvania: Tab Books, 1979.

Smith, R. L. Text of keynote address at the 1981 NFLCP National Convention in Atlanta, Ga. Community Television Review, October 1981, 4 26-29.

Tate, C. E. CATV: community involvement in education (unpublished paper presented at the Conference on Adult Education, Washington, D. C., April 25-27, 1974).

[a]Taylor, E. T. Visit to Coastline Community College - memo. Educational Video Resources, MIT, November 20, 1980 In NFLCP, Educators and cable television. Kettering, Ohio: NFLCP, [n.d.].

[b]Taylor, E. T. Visit to San Diego State University, California - memo. Educational Video Resources, MIT, November 21, 1980 In NFLCP, Educators and cable television, Kettering, Ohio: NFLCP, [n.d.].

Taylor, R. A. People's TV is here - on cable systems. U. S. News & World Report, May 10, 1982, 86, 84.

_____. TV shows made by people like you. Changing Times, April 1982, 36, 80-83.

United Cable TV Corporation. Cablecasting and public access in the eighties. Denver, Col.: 1981.

United Church of Christ. A short course on cable. New York: By the author, 1981.

Wolin, R. M. San Diego seniors use TV to educate each other and the community. Community Television Review, May 1980, 3, 4-5.